

Making a Difference

The Iowa Commission on the Status of Women (ICSW) is a state agency that seeks to assure equality for Iowa women. The ICSW advocates for Iowa women, working to equalize women's opportunities and to promote full participation by women in the economic, political, and social life of the state.

Established in 1972 by the Iowa Legislature, the ICSW is a division of the Department of Human Rights. The ICSW is composed of nine citizens appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Iowa Senate. Two members of the Senate, two members of the Iowa House of Representatives, and the director of the Department of Human Rights serve *ex officio*.

The ICSW represents the interests of women in a number of areas including pensions, elder care, sexual harassment, welfare, insurance, divorce, nontraditional jobs, displaced homemakers, pay equity, housing, domestic violence, sexual assault, education, and credit.

The ICSW is a responsive, visible advocacy agency for Iowa women's needs and provides a basis for statewide study and action on issues affecting women. Through research, education, legislative action, and special projects, the Commission is a strong voice for women's rights.

Annually, the ICSW researches and submits a program of legislative priorities to the Governor and the General Assembly in the areas of aging and caregiving, economics, education, health, insurance, violence against women, welfare reform, justice, and government. The ICSW also advocates for women's interests at the federal level, testifies on behalf of women at legislative hearings, and monitors pending legislation for its impact on women.

As is legislatively mandated, the ICSW administers grant funds to programs that provide services to Iowans in transition. It also administers grant funds for training on issues of violence against women.

Projects

The ICSW works on a number of projects that seek to advance the status of women. The ICSW:

Collects employment related information and works toward pay equity.

Administers a Challenge Grant to address the needs of females in the juvenile justice system.

Holds a public hearing each fall, in which individuals, agencies, and organizations are encouraged to present testimony. Testimony assists the ICSW in developing proposals that are sent to the Governor and General Assembly annually.

Sends the bi-monthly newsletter, *IoWoman*, to more than 8,600 individuals and organizations statewide.

Recognizes Iowa women through the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame and the annual *Write Women Back Into History* Essay Contest, for students grades 6-9. The ICSW also awards the Cristine Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice.

Information

The ICSW offers the following publications on its website, www.state.ia.us/dhr/sw, and in hard copy:

Annual Report

Cristine Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice

Divorce: Things to Consider (2002)

Female Juvenile Justice Report (1996)

Financial Safety Planning for Older Women (2000)

How to Get Your Bearings: How to Get a Job (1998)

Referral Information on Programs to Assist Women/Minorities in Establishing and Expanding Small Businesses (2003)

Iowa Women's Hall of Fame Book

Iowa Women and the Law in English and Spanish (2002)

Promising Directions: Programs that Serve Iowa Girls in a Single-Sex Environment (2000)

Providing Gender-Specific Services for Adolescent Female Offenders: Guidelines & Resources (1999)

Sexism in Education (2001)

Sexual Harassment: It's Against the Law (2001)

Status of Iowa Women Report

Why Not Women? (1998)

Commission

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the lives of Iowa women*

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